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## Press Release:

# Future EU Climate Change Policy - Challenges and Opportunities for New Member States

International conference, Warsaw 23-24 January 2006

### How does climate protection enhance economic development?

On 23 January 2006, high level representatives from 14 countries and the European Commission met in Warsaw to open a two-day international conference on future EU climate change policy. About 90 participants attended the event. The conference represented the first in a series of events sponsored by the European Commission, intended to promote stakeholder and policymaker dialogue on these very important issues within New Member States, Accession Countries and Candidate Countries. Minister Prof. Jan Szyszko opened the Conference.

Participants discussed both opportunities and challenges presented by future EU Climate Change Policy for EU New Member States, Accession Countries and Candidate Countries. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions offers a range of opportunities to enhance economic development – particularly in a world of increasing energy prices, and increasing energy supply and energy security challenges. The benefits of decreased fossil-fuel dependency and greater energy efficiency include:

- fuel cost savings;
- decreased exposure to volatile fossil fuel prices;
- health-related benefits from cleaner energy production and fewer emissions; and
- new employment opportunities in a range of sectors.

After the UN international climate change conference in Montreal in December 2005 (COP 11), an international process is now underway to discuss long-term co-operative action to address climate change. Addressing climate change beyond 2012 – when existing commitments expire - will require dedicated human and technical resources from New Member States, Accession and Candidate Countries. The involvement of stakeholders from a range of government ministries and key industrial sectors will be essential.

EU New Member States and Accession Countries are well-positioned to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in a cost-effective manner. For example, energy efficiency in many countries is still considerably lower than in the EU-15. Increasing the energy efficiency of production processes, appliances and buildings offers a means for these countries to both save energy costs and protect the climate – enhancing, rather than impeding, economic development.

At the same time, further reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is needed to avoid increases of surface temperatures, with potentially devastating consequences for the environment, economies and societies alike. In a world of increasing emissions, extreme weather events, including droughts, heatwaves and floods are likely to increase, causing human and economic

losses. Also, sea level is predicted to rise, impacting coastal infrastructure; and biodiversity is expected to decline, with unpredictable flow-on effects.

To avoid the most severe consequences of climate change, it is widely agreed that average temperature should not be permitted to increase by more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. This target is more likely to be achieved if greenhouse gas concentrations do not exceed 450 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent. To stabilise concentrations at this level, significant global cuts in emissions will be needed. The European Council has stated that reduction for developed countries in the order of 15-30% by 2020 should be considered. For the long term, the European Parliament suggests a reduction target of 60-80 % by 2050.

As a first step, the EU has committed under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce its aggregate greenhouse gas emissions by 8% below 1990 levels by 2008-2012, the first commitment period. While most EU New Member States and Accession Countries are currently on track to meet their reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol, further reductions will be needed to innovate Europe's economy and stabilise global greenhouse gas concentrations.

## **Background**

Greenhouse gas emissions from increasing fossil fuel consumption are impacting the Earth's climate. Global average surface temperatures are expected to increase by 1.4–5.8°C over 1990 levels by the year 2100 as a result of past and future emissions, and all simulations indicate that human activity has played a significant role in the increases already experienced in the late 20th century. This increase in temperature has potentially very severe consequences for the environment and for EU new member states and accession countries, through the impacts of more frequent and intense extreme weather events, sea level rise and a decline of biodiversity.

## **Conference Organisation**

The international conference “Future EU Climate Change Policy - Challenges and Opportunities for New Member States” is organised by Ecologic - Institute for International and European Environmental Policy (Berlin) - in co-operation with

- the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Warsaw,
- the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) at the Free University of Amsterdam,
- the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD), London,
- the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), Berlin as well as a network of experts.

For further information, please contact Dr. Nils Meyer-Ohlendorf, Senior Fellow at Ecologic (0049-30-86880117) or Dr. Andrzej Kassenberg, President of the Institute for Sustainable Development (22) 851 04 02) or refer to the Conference web site: <http://www.ecologic-events.de/climate2012/warsaw-conference/index.htm>.